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7 November 1948

COUNTRY : Yugoslavia

SUBJECT : Anti-Communist Activity in Northeastern Slovenia

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(1) The inhabitants of the above districts are more opposed to the present regime than those of the southern and western districts of Slovenia. There is thought to be some support for the idea of a free Slovenia bound up in a Lower Danube Federation. However, the feelings of the people do not develop into open criticism in view of the psychological and physical grip of the present regime.

(2) There is only one organized action being waged against the regime and this is by the Križari (or Crusaders), which, however, cannot be said to be a systematically organized movement. Liaison between the various groups is very weak, but they have the backing of the people, especially the villagers who help them by giving food, et cetera.

(3) The regime attempts to keep secret the existence of these armed anti-communist bands, not only in Slovenia, but even more so abroad. The population are forbidden under dire penalties to talk about these Križari. No news about their actions is published and Križari who have been taken prisoner together with any of their sympathizers are not brought to trial, but are executed at once or taken to an unknown place from which they never return.

(4) Only in two instances has the regime been compelled to allow the publication of reports of their actions to appear in the newspapers. The first such instance was the discovery of a group of about twenty-five anti-communists in Kamnica, near Maribor, in July. The second was a raid made on 16 August on a secret wireless set in a village near Ptuj.

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(5) The latter incident was also made the excuse for deporting a number of priests. Several days later Ivan Jeric, the Catholic priest in Prekomurja, was arrested. Jeric was the most powerful member of the Slovene Popular Party in Prekomurja and was, therefore, strongly opposed to the Communists. Apart from this another six Catholic priests were also arrested.

(6) Recently Dr. Matko Smudari, a member of the Belgrade parliament, held two meetings in Gornja Polcakva and Tinje, but the people who came heckled him to such an extent that Smudari was forced to conclude the meeting and return home.

(7) In the prison at Maribor there are now one hundred and twenty-eight ex-partisans and thirty-six ex-Communists under arrest. All these are people who during the war wholeheartedly believed in the partisan and communist movement but afterwards were disillusioned and started to complain against Communist methods.

(8) The economic situation in these districts is bad. In Prekomurja, the villagers say that their economic situation is worse than it has ever been. At the same time, the standing of the militia and KNOJ are being raised and in every larger town there is a garrison. In fact, it is as though the country were under occupation. On 25 August, about a thousand infantry arrived in Maribor.

(9) The people's former sympathy for their Russian liberators has been considerably reduced in view of the savage behavior of the Russian troops in Prekomurja.

(10) Several instances are given of attacks by the Kvisari on members of the militia and KNOJ. The most notable recent attempt was on 3 August when an avalanche of boulders descended on the railway line between Zagreb and Ljubljana at a time when Marshal Tito's train was expected to be passing. This was found to have been caused by explosives of a type used in the coal-mines of Trbovaljka. The results of the investigation were kept secret.

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